

Business Plan 2024-25

Vision:

Well run and trusted charities making a difference in peoples' lives

Purpose:

'enabling charities to do things right through proportionate regulation, best practice and advice'

Values and related enabling behaviours:

Integrity Honest, open, supportive, fair, trustworthy, respectful, valuing diversity, accountable.

Independence Impartial, fearless, supporting equality, rigorous.

Excellence Striving to be the best we can be, implementing best practice, learning, influencing, leading, seeking continuous improvement, innovating, proactive, targeted.

Accessible Good communications, flexible approach, listening, respectful in tone, reflective, engaging, collaborative, encouraging and positive, visible.

Proportionate Supportive, targeted, being responsive.

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Foreword

At the start of this business plan there are over 7,200 charities on the register of charities on the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland's (the 'Commission') website. The Commission will be working throughout 2024-25 to have the right processes in place to support, guide and enable charities to achieve their best potential.

We will continue to respond to the Independent Review of Charity Regulation¹ and its change agenda, which the Commission is committed to. The Commission aims to build on the progress it achieved in the first two years since the review was concluded. This saw planned work progressed on over thirty recommendations related solely to the Commission, and also assisting the Department for Communities (DfC) to progress five of its key recommendations. Progressing this broad front required a significant allocation from overall resources and time - which cannot be sustained. In 2024-25 the Board have deprioritised ten independent review related actions to manage risks presented by the Executive's financial situation. This is to ensure the Commission's focus is on delivering its regulatory agenda.

The Commission will continue to prioritise registration to enhance accountability of the sector, alongside working with DfC on assessing the implementation of a registration threshold. While undertaking compliance monitoring work at a level to maintain public confidence, the Commission will continue to contribute to the development of the new Charity Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP). We will also continue working with and supporting the Stakeholder Forum as a key means to develop as an enabling regulator.

Some work under the strategic aim of developing as a more effective and efficient public body is dependent on DfC's timetable. Implementing a new Partnership Agreement for governance arrangements, changes to committee structures and the out workings of a potential scheme of delegation can only be progressed once agreed by DfC.

Overall, we remain committed to the Commission continuing to deliver on our core regulatory activities while continuing our development as an enabling, responsive and collaborative regulator.

Gerard McCurdy
Chief Commissioner

Frances McCandless
Chief Executive

¹ <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/communities/independent-review-of-charity-regulation-ni.PDF>

Executive summary

The Business Plan comprises six sections, with the first introducing the Commission and its regulatory remit. Section two lists the organisation's vision, purpose, and values. The third section outlines the strategic aims and risks to delivery of the plan. The strategic aims stem from the Commission's 2023-26 Strategic Plan, which has been approved by the Minister for Communities. The four strategic aims relate to how the organisation will deliver its wider statutory remit, the primary objective of which is increasing public trust and confidence in charities, as well as the range of Independent Review recommendations² (IR recs) referenced in this plan.

Section four sets out a range of business results and key performance indicators which the organisation intends to achieve. Section five is the largest part in the plan and outlines the priorities, actions, and measures that will be progressed over the twelve-month period. The final section outlines the resources the Commission anticipates receiving to deliver the plan and assumptions underlying them.

In terms of regulatory activity, the Commission has set the following performance targets for 2024-25.

External KPIs

- Process 60% of registration applications to decision within six months of receiving an application.
- Review 150 Annual Monitoring Returns (AMRs) of charities legally required to report to the Commission.
- 60% of enquiry cases concluded within 12 months of receipt of concern.
- 40 engagement events/activities per year.
- Over the life of the business plan complete or substantially progress actions related to 19 recommendations from the Independent Review of Charity Regulation that the Commission leads on, as well as actions to assist sponsor department progress on 7 recommendations it leads on.

Internal KPIs

- Manage the organisation within 1% budget.
- Manage staff sickness absence within 3%.
- Pay 90% of suppliers within 10 days.

The Commission's current source of income is 100% 'Grant in Aid' from the Department for Communities. The overall indicative 2024-25 resource budget allocation is £1,896k. This is subject to the outcome of an Equality Impact Assessment of the Executive's budget anticipated in September 2024.

² <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/communities/independent-review-of-charity-regulation-ni-dept-response.pdf>

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Charity Commission for Northern Ireland is the independent regulator of Northern Ireland charities, as created by the Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008 (the "Act"), which was amended by the Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2022. The Commission has five statutory objectives under the Act relating to public trust and confidence in charities, operation of the public benefit requirement, compliance by charity trustees, effective use of charitable resources, and enhancing accountability of charities. At the start of 2024-25 there are over 7,200 registered charities with their charitable purposes, details and information about their annual accounts and reports on the Commission's website³ for public display.
- 1.2 The Commission is a non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB), established by Royal Assent to deliver the statutory provisions of the Act, which was recently amended by the Charities Act (Northern Ireland 2022). It is sponsored by the Department for Communities (DfC), with a board of up to seven Commissioners appointed by the Department for Communities. The organisation's Board is comprised solely of these Commissioners, who carry out both a governance oversight role and decision-making function. The Board operates a Schedule One committee process to make charity regulatory decisions.
- 1.3 As an NDPB the Commission is independent in its decision making, acting without fear or favour, in the public interest. Various decisions of the Commission are appealable to the Charity Tribunal or the Courts. The Commission welcomes the opportunity to test and clarify charity law as opportunities arise and also operates an internal decision review process to ensure decisions are robust.
- 1.4 The Commission has five statutory objectives under the Act:
1. *to increase public trust and confidence in charities.*
 2. *to promote awareness and understanding of the operation of the public benefit requirement.*
 3. *to promote compliance by charity trustees with their legal obligations in exercising control and management of the administration of their charities.*
 4. *to promote the effective use of charitable resources.*
 5. *to enhance the accountability of charities to donors, beneficiaries and the general public.*

³ <https://www.charitycommissionni.org.uk/charity-search/?pageNumber=1>

2.0 Commission Vision, Purpose and Values

2.1. The Commission's Vision for the period of this business plan is:

'Well run and trusted charities making a difference in peoples' lives.'

2.2. Our Purpose is:

'enabling charities to do things right through proportionate regulation, best practice and advice.'

2.3. The Commission works with various stakeholders and provides services which reflect our organisational values and behaviours in terms of being:

Value	Enabling Behaviours
<i>Integrity</i>	<i>Honest, open, supportive, fair, trustworthy, respectful, valuing diversity, accountable.</i>
<i>Independence</i>	<i>Impartial, fearless, supporting equality, rigorous.</i>
<i>Excellence</i>	<i>Striving to be the best we can be, implementing best practice, learning, influencing, responding, leading, seeking continuous improvement, innovating, proactive, targeted, proportionate.</i>
<i>Accessible</i>	<i>Good communications, flexible approach, listening, respectful in tone, reflective, engaging, collaborative, encouraging and positive, visible.</i>
<i>Proportionate</i>	<i>Supportive, targeted, being responsive.</i>

3.0 Strategic Aims and Risk Framework for 2024-25

- 3.1 Following publication of the [Independent Review of Charity Regulation](#) (January 2022) and the coming into effect of the [Charities Act \(Northern Ireland\) 2022](#) the organisation will focus on the following Strategic Aims:
- Aim 1: Progressing charity registration to enhance accountability.
 - Aim 2: Progressing our development as an enabling regulator.
 - Aim 3: Continuing to develop proportionate regulation.
 - Aim 4: Operating as an effective and efficient public body.
- 3.2 In connection with these aims the Commission will face a range of challenges and issues which are set out fully in PESTEL format in section 3 of the 2023-26 Strategic Plan. These include budget availability and pressures on the charity sector and are reflected below. The Commission's governance framework incorporates a corporate risk register to address risks in relation to each annual business plan.

Risk Framework for 2024-25

- 3.3. The 2023-26 strategic plan sets out the Board's overall approach to managing risk and its appetite for such. The risks to be managed in relation to delivery of this business plan include:
- Lack of certainty and timing around legislative/policy changes identified in the Independent Review.
 - Potential efficiencies that new committees and decision-making processes could create are not realised and business plan targets are further reduced.
 - There may be no scheme of delegation or what is approved may provide for a different outcome to that consulted on reducing resources released back into the organisation to deliver services.
 - If a scheme of delegation is introduced, the benefits of change may not be fully realised without a realistic transitional period.
 - Better staff engagement and retention may not be realised because of relocation and lack of budget for spend on learning and development.
 - Lack of reliable on-line systems and robust information security procedures results in poor service delivery and potential for information security breaches.

Review of performance

- 3.4. During 2023-24, the Commission delivered 75% (six out of eight) key performance indicators (KPIs). Both the number of registration decisions and annual monitoring returns subject to compliance checking targets were achieved. Of the 103 actions set out under the four 2023-24 business plan objectives, 89% (92) of the actions

were completed. Just over a tenth (11) of actions were not completed at year end. This includes progress under strategic aim 1 on updating and revamping the *Registering your charity* guidance, as resources were not available to fully progress the second part of this action ie to update a range of associated digital/online support materials. One action, related to developing *Annual Return Regulations 2023-24*, was not necessary as the Board decided not to produce the regulations as a need for change was not identified.

External KPIs

- 380 registration application decisions made (target: 330).
- 254 new applications for charitable status were received, with 71% of applications processed within six months of receiving an application (target: 60%). This rose to 95% processed within six months of receiving a 'complete' application.
- 75% of enquiry cases were processed to closure within 12 months of receiving a concern about a charity (target: 60%).
- 65% of concerns about charities had an initial enquiry risk assessment completed within 30 days (target: 50%)
- 158 annual returns legally required to report to the Commission reviewed (target: 150).

Internal KPIs

- 99% of creditors' invoices paid within 10 working days (target: 90%).
- Total budget managed within 98.6% (target: 99%).
- Staff absence levels managed within 4.39% (target: 3%).

3.5. For further information on the Commission's performance during the year, including service indicators and actions progressed, see the *Detailed analysis* section of the 2023-24 Annual Report and Accounts⁴.

⁴ <https://www.charitycommissionni.org.uk/about-us/about-the-charity-commission/annual-report-summary-documents/>

4.0 Business Results and Key Performance Indicators

4.1 The Commission aims to sustain a range of business results and key performance indicators (KPIs) over the course of this business plan. This will be heavily reliant on the level of resourcing provided by sponsor department.

4.2 Section four of the 2023-26 Strategic Plan provides the overall framework including plans in 2024-25 for:

- Providing proportionality in checking annual returns and taking action against those who fail to comply, alongside management of the enquiries programme to ensure risk based and proportionate regulation.
- Creating a long-term strategy for registration and charity annual reporting, including the implementation of a registration threshold and deregistration of appropriate charities.
- Improving annual return processes by reviewing and automating checking, where possible.

External KPIs

- Process 60% of registration applications to decision within six months of receiving an application.
- Review 150 Annual Monitoring Returns (AMR) of charities legally required to report to the Commission.
- 60% of enquiry cases concluded within 12 months of receipt of concern.
- 40 engagement events across the year.
- Over the life of the business plan complete or substantially progress actions related to 19 recommendations from the Independent Review of Charity Regulation that the Commission leads on, as well as actions to assist sponsor department progress 7 recommendations it has the lead on.

Internal KPIs

- Manage the organisation within 1% budget.
- Manage staff sickness absence within 3%.
- Pay 90% of suppliers within 10 days.

4.3 The Commission intends that many actions set out in the following section (that relate to priority Independent Review recommendations) are to be progressed in this business plan. Those to do with the Commission's regulatory approach eg reviewing and developing new guidance, and engagement with stakeholders eg training, are scalable. If more resourcing is made available, then additional activities could be progressed in relation to these recommendations in future years of the strategic plan.

5.0 Priorities, Actions and Measures

5.1 The text below outlines the actions that will be undertaken to progress the various priorities for 2024-25:

Strategic aim 1 - Progressing charity registration to enhance accountability.	Actions needed	Performance measures and information
<p>Priority - we will support accountability of the sector through growing the register by:</p> <p>a) Continuing to prioritise registration and clear the backlog (IR rec 7, 22, 31a).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement registration decisions. • Prioritise and update a number of associated registration online support materials, as required (IR rec 16c). • reviewing and taking forward positive action on a number of organisations on the deemed list. • Update internal guidance on registration, subject to staff resources being in place. 	<p>We publish performance information in our annual report on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time taken from receipt of application to decision. • Process 60% of registration applications to decision within six months of receiving an application. • Take forward positive action on 18 deemed organisations. • Number of new applications for charitable status received. • Number of new Expressions of Intent received. • Number of users accessing digital support materials.
<p>b) Work with DfC on impact and implementation of a registration threshold (rec 26).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scope revamp <i>Registering your Charity guidance</i>. • Amend other associated guidance and materials, model governing 	<p>We publish performance information in our annual report on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report on participation in meetings and progress of recommendation.

	<p>documents and manuals.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scope out impact of threshold on casework. • Scope out impact of threshold on legal and policy. • Scope out impact of threshold on monitoring & compliance. • Scope out impact of threshold on enquiries. • Scope and develop a deregistration process including manual, IT systems and commence drafting external guidance. • Quantify scale of smaller charities (below threshold) continuing to register. • Update post OLAR registration survey to capture information on organisations below £20k. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two online Information sessions on introduction of the threshold if applicable. • Infographic for below threshold organisations on registering and deregistering if appropriate.
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Strategic aim 2 - Progressing our development as an enabling regulator	Actions	Performance measures and information
<p>Priority - We will respond to the development of charity regulation by:</p> <p>a) Working with sponsor department and other charity regulators and stakeholders to take forward key regulatory developments.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to contribute to UK & Ireland and International charity regulators' networks. • Continue to contribute to the development of the new Charity SORP through the Charities SORP Committee and engagement with partners and via our role in the charities SORP-making authority (as resources allow). • Deliver SORP consultation in partnership with other regulators. 	<p>We will publish information in the annual report on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Six monthly update to International regulators practice groups. • Meetings: SORP Committee/stakeholder groups.
<p>b) Enabling and facilitating the better administration and operation of charities through casework (IR rec 16c).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progress casework applications and notifications to closure. • Provide legal advice on complex cases as required. • Continue to update and review guidance, as resources allow (IR rec 16c). 	<p>We will publish information in the annual report on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of casework decisions. • Number of notifications processed to closure. • Number of new and significant updates to guidance.
<p>c) Developing and implementing an effective engagement strategy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to act as secretariat to the stakeholder forum. • Refresh and ongoing liaison with 	<p>We will publish information in the annual report on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of Stakeholder forum.

<p>reflecting a key role for the Stakeholder forum to inform the Commission's thinking across a range of areas (IR rec 16 d, e).</p>	<p>helper groups.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refresh and ongoing liaison with critical friends group about how guidance is pitched and communicated to charities (IR rec 16 c). • Review new or updated guidance from a legal perspective to ensure legally robust. • Continued engagements across the sector and issues/queries arising outside formal consultation and engagement channels (resource dependent). • Continue testing guidance and materials. • Information events (as resources allow) (IR rec 16 d, e). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of times Stakeholder forum met. • Number of external engagement events/activities (target 40).
<p>d) Developing and implementing a new communications strategy to change the Commission's communication culture and enhance effectiveness of key communications channels (IR rec 13, 56).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement agreed communications strategy reflecting the Board taking the lead in setting tone and direction (IR rec 13). • Review tone of voice and generic signatures guidance (IR rec 17). • Raise awareness and understanding of the Commission's approach to risk-based regulation (IR rec 17). • Pilot direct transfer of calls to 	<p>We will publish information in the annual report on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Usage of website. • Feedback from users on changes to website. • NI Direct service activity. • Feedback from users on NI Direct and frequency of reporting to SMT /Board and bi-annual Legal Advisory Group.

	<p>ensure that the phone service helpline allows escalation of a call directly to a Commission staff member if there is not an immediate connection to a staff member (IR rec 18).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial roll out of direct engagement with charity trustees on compliance & monitoring issues. 	
<p>e) Review and redesign website (IR rec 19a).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project plan and communication plan. • Make interim changes to site map – keep, change, remove. • Agree specification and procure new site and hosting. • Develop site with user engagement. • Internal & External User Acceptance Testing. • Launch new site. • Monitor user views and feedback. 	<p>We will publish information in the annual report on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project delivery.

Strategic Aim 3 - Continuing to develop proportionate regulation	Actions needed	Performance measures and information
<p>Priority - we will support compliance by charity trustees with their legal obligations and address non-compliance by:</p> <p>a) Implementing annual return process including risk based checking, and preparation for automating selection for risk based checking (IR rec 54).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to evaluate the new online Annual Monitoring Return (AMR) form and guidance, including revised online post AMR survey (IR rec 19b). • Review risk-based parameters for selection of Annual Monitoring Returns for checking (IR rec 54). • Review a risk-based sample of Annual Monitoring Returns (basic compliance checks) for compliance with reporting regulations. • Update manuals following proportionality pilot of Basic Compliance Checks and update systems. • Take appropriate proportionate action, in a sample of cases, if annual returns are not submitted by charities as required by the law. 	<p>We will publish information in the annual report on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 150 Annual Monitoring Returns (AMRs) due to the Commission subject to basic compliance check. • 100% of charities checked (BCCs) with 'serious' issues in accounts issued with guidance on how to improve AMR submission. • Report % of charities who failed to submit their accounts on time and marked on register as in default or equivalent status when status switched back on. • Number of concerns about charity accounts. • Changes identified in Monitoring & Compliance processes. • Feedback from the sector and site users on the updated filing status. • Number of hits on the register webpage.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor emerging risk issues as they appear through Commission processes and maintain existing focus on safeguarding issues as they arise. • Ensure accuracy of register by updating financial year end dates in the event of change requests or final year end dates following notification of closure. • Develop Annual Return Regulations 2024-25 if required. 	
<p>b) Developing monitoring & compliance processes to further incorporate proportionality considerations (IR rec 17b)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review procedures for filing defaulters in terms of proportionality ie tone, guidance etc (IR rec 17b). • Scope out development of filing defaulters entity on CRM. • Publish mid-year annual monitoring review to promote compliance. • Review long running compliance cases to determine proportionate action. • Work with other regulators to identify proportionate actions in relation to compliance cases. • Continue to consider reporting requirements of a Common 	<p>We will publish information in the annual report on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes identified in Monitoring & Compliance processes. • Number of information sessions with sector and advisors.

	Investment Fund.	
c) Monitor and evaluate traffic light system for filing status display on the register (IR rec 38).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Associated guidance to be updated and reviewed by critical friends. • Gather feedback on changes to guidance and online register display 	<p>We will publish information in the annual report on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback from the sector and site users on the updated filing status. • Number of hits on the register webpage.
d) Continue development and testing of Risk Assessment Framework to help inform proportionality criteria to ensure prioritisation for enquiries, compliance and AMR selection (IR rec 6).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore and develop Risk Assessment Framework in relation to Basic Compliance Check selection. • Test Risk Assessment Framework for proportionality and flexibility in functionality (IR rec 6). • Prioritise development of next phase of the Risk Assessment Framework and the supporting ICT (IR Rec 5). 	<p>We will publish information in the annual report on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progress of implementing the Concerns Risk Assessment Template.
e) Manage Enquiries programme to ensure risk based and proportionate regulation. (IR rec 57, 58)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued development of enquiries manual. • Continue to process concerns, carry out investigative work and legally review recommendations which invoke statutory powers, as required. • Review and improve written records of the decision-making process in relation to statutory inquiries, record keeping (IR rec 57). 	<p>We will publish information in the annual report on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of concerns received about charities which have an initial enquiry risk assessment within 30 days (Target 70%). • % of enquiry cases concluded within 12 months of receipt of concern (target 60%). • % of enquiry cases older than 12 months processed to closure. • Our risk-based approach to regulation. • Number of concerns received / enquiries

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review long running statutory inquiries with a view to reaching the necessary decisions to close them out in a timely and effective manner (IR rec 58). • Consider ways to improve Sch 1 process including new ICT. 	<p>opened/closed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of recommendations brought to Schedule 1 Committee. • Number of instances self-regulatory and regulatory guidance issued. • Number of orders & directions issued. • Number of statutory inquiries opened.
<p>f) Subject to DfC prioritisation, work with the department on initial scoping for a new Charities Bill and Charitable Incorporated Organisations (IR Recs 31a, 34, 35)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set up project teams including ICT to Contribute to DfC scoping work. • Input to department's timetable and plans. • Obtain legal input on proposals. • Liaise with OSCR and CCEW. • Support DfC, where required, with discussions on schools. • Contribute to work on s167 and general development of Charities Bill. 	<p>We will publish information in the annual report on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • work in conjunction with DfC.

Strategic Aim 4 - Operating as an effective and efficient public body	Actions Needed	Performance measures and information
<p>Priority - We will manage our business and deliver services to our customers in an efficient and effective way while promoting a positive internal organisational culture by:</p> <p>a) maintaining a focus on organisational governance, culture and values (IR rec 3, 62, 76).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Commission will embrace this opportunity to reset the culture of regulation (IR rec 3). • In tandem with the Department, document the new partnership arrangements, roles and responsibilities for future relationships with the Department in a new Partnership Agreement (IR rec 76). • Implement any changes to committee structures. • Report on the Independent Counsel Review Action Plan progress. (IR rec 62). • Respond to and progress litigation as required. • Review records and implement retention and disposal schedule as appropriate. 	<p>We will publish information in our annual report governance section on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audit opinions. • Reports on internal compliance. • Results of staff survey. • Compliance with performance management strategy. • People Strategy Action Plan Implementation. • Progress of policy development agenda. • Use of available statutory powers. • Number of tribunal and court challenges.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and commence implementation of a new 2-year research strategy. 	
b) reporting reliable information on performance against targets and standards, and on the use of all available statutory powers (IR Rec 61, 83).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reporting against business plan and on progress on IR recommendations. • Implement assurance checks programme. • Regular reports, briefings and updates to SMT, Board and sponsor department. (IR rec 2, 83). 	We will publish performance information in our annual report re corporate Key Performance Indicators.
c) developing the capacity to manage change effectively and identify ongoing improvements to systems and processes (IR recs 9,10).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Input to work relevant to the Department's future review of its funding model for the Commission (IR rec 9). • Assist the Department to examine the need for short term, interim resources to be provided to the Commission before legislation has completed (IR rec 10). • Continuously monitor, adapt and report on operation of the Policy Development Plan to guide prioritisation of policy work across the Commission. 	<p>We will publish information in our annual report on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project/programme teamwork. • Feedback from critical friends and users on testing new systems.
d) monitoring and responding to customer needs and satisfaction.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review customer service standards/charter in light of new NIPSO model complaints scheme. 	<p>We will publish performance information in the annual report on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of complaints received about the

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effectively deal with complaints and identify lessons learnt. • Comply with FOIs/SARs and provide legal review as required. 	<p>Commission.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of information requests (FoI, DPA, EiR) received and responded to. • Feedback from customer surveys on website. <p>We will publish information in the annual report on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of the Action Plan arising out of Independent Counsel’s final report. • Number of stakeholder forum meetings and key issues.
e) operate HR policies via people strategy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement people strategy including staff/commissioner training plan. • Continue with updating of staff handbook. • Plan for relocation of office in line with DfC business plan and undertake relevant next steps. • Analysis of staff and Commissioner training needs and delivery of relevant development programme. 	<p>We will publish performance information in the annual report on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outcome of accommodation review. • Staff engagement indicators. • Training spend.
f) having a commitment to promoting equality of opportunity and good relations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produce and monitor the implementation of new five-year equality and disability plans. • Training and outreach. • Annual equality training for staff. – developed and reported on. • Equality, diversity and inclusion 	<p>We will publish an annual progress report to ECNI on scheme implementation and achievement of the action plan.</p> <p>We will publish ad hoc information on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • equality issues identified through project and program teams. • No. of equality scheme complaints.

	as part of engagement strategy.	
g) Implement the 2023-26 ICT strategy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ICT strategy board to meet six monthly. • Pilot new online forms. • Cyber assurance. • Sustain Intranet usage and development. 	<p>We will publish performance information in the annual report on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ICT strategy implementation.
h) Implement the out workings of a potential scheme of delegation (IR rec 90).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scope out changes to manuals, guidance and ICT systems and implement, subject to any Scheme being agreed. 	<p>We will publish performance information in the annual report on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scale of preparatory work. • Potential release of resource into other parts of regulatory work.
i) Operate a robust internal legal advisory capacity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide robust advice. • Provide representation of Commission at Tribunal and Court proceedings. • Develop, review and update priority MOUs. 	<p>We will publish performance information in the annual report on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Levels of advice internal provision. • No. of Tribunals

6.0 Resources

6.1 The Commission's current source of income is 100% 'Grant in Aid' from the Sponsor Department. The following table outlines the allocations across the main budget headings. The introduction section of this plan provides a narrative explaining what activities will be reduced and/or stopped.

Item	2023-24 At year end	2024-25
Revenue Costs	£ 000's	£ 000's
Commissioners' Remuneration	83	79
Staffing Costs	1,470	1,494
Staff/Commissioner Non-Remuneration Costs	88	42
IT Costs	55	72
Premises Costs	96	105
General Running Costs	28	33
Programme Delivery Costs	182	71
Total Revenue Costs	2,002	1,896
Capital spend	23	50 ¹
Capital Leased Asset (accommodation)	38	100 ²
Total Capital Costs	61	150
Overall Total	2,063	2,046

Budgeting Assumptions

The detailed budget assumptions are as follows.

Commissioner costs	It is assumed a full Board will be in place following public appointments by DfC. It is assumed there will continue to be payments for Schedule 1 committee work and additional Commissioner days.
Staff Remuneration	It is assumed the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) pay settlement for 2024-25 will be a 2% increase and continue for a further three years, and that employer payroll costs will be fully met and remain unchanged.
Staff/Commissioners non-remuneration costs	Recruitment budget will be monitored in anticipation of continuing staff turnover of around 10-15% per annum arising from potential relocation and pay awards. The training budget will be flat lined to reflect the need to maintain existing staff knowledge and any recruited as part of normal churn.
IT costs	IT costs will increase due to increased web hosting costs in 2024-25. Minor spend is anticipated in terms of some online form software support.
Facilities/Premises costs	Facilities/Premises costs are expected to continue to increase in line with inflation. Sponsor department are taking forward the Commission's accommodation needs with a view to a move being confirmed towards the end of the business year at the very latest.
General running costs	General running costs are anticipated to increase in line with inflation.
Programme Costs (excl legal and professional costs)	Programme delivery costs are anticipated to be reduced to bare minimum in light of budget pressures.
Legal and professional costs	Legal and professional fees to go back to normal levels with no large individual claims.
Research costs	No spend on research during the year.